

Democrats have charted involves massive amounts of spending that will lead to higher prices for everyone.

As Americans face higher prices at the gas station and grocery store, we must work at fixing our supply chain issues, returning to being energy independent, helping Americans return to work, and reining in our spending to slow down the rate of inflation. This out-of-control spending is jeopardizing our economy and hurting Americans.

To my colleagues—to my Democrat colleagues, in particular—rather than assuming a mandate by the voters and pushing the tax-and-spend spree legislation with 51 votes, let's work together. Let's work together to get government spending and borrowing in check. If this is done, it will be done for the well-being of all Americans.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, work continues on Democrats' socialist spending spree, and the Senate seems to be on track to vote on their bill in the near future. Well, maybe. It depends on who you ask at any given time around here these days.

Just to highlight the high level of uncertainty surrounding this process, President Biden was on Capitol Hill just this morning—his second visit this month—to twist the arms of still-undecided Democrats.

As they continue to see what sticks to the wall, it is good to know that priorities like government jobs for climate activists, tax credits for environmental justice programs at colleges and universities, and a \$200 million park in Speaker PELOSI's district may soon come up for a vote in the Senate. It is just too bad that Democrats have been so focused on expanding government that they haven't actually taken time to do some of the essential business of government.

Fiscal year 2021 ended a month ago. We are into fiscal year 2022. Yet, so far, the Senate has not taken up a single appropriations bill for the 2022 fiscal year.

On the other hand, perhaps it is not surprising, since the 2022 appropriations bills recently introduced by the committee chair are rabidly partisan productions packed with poison pills, that one can only assume are designed to make the bills fail: the taxpayer

funding of abortion, a measure that would allow Democrats to use the IRS for partisan purposes, policies that would allow certain criminal illegal aliens to be released into the United States.

Well, we may be better off without these bills.

One bill—of which there is no question we should have taken up months ago, however—is the National Defense Authorization Act. The NDAA is one of the most important bills we consider each year. It authorizes funding for national defense priorities, like critical upgrades to our defense capabilities, as well as funding for our military men and women—from pay increases to protective equipment, to investments in Impact Aid.

It is not a bill we can afford to ignore, but under Senate Democrats, the bill has taken a back seat to Democrats' pet priority, and that is this massive, partisan tax-and-spending legislation. So, while Democrats focus on expanding the size of government, critical military priorities are going unauthorized and unfunded.

Without the National Defense Authorization Act, and then the Defense appropriations bill that falls from it, the military can't sign off on contracts for critical new equipment. Shipbuilding projects, military infrastructure projects, the development of new combat systems—they are all having to wait while Democrats negotiate over their socialist spending spree.

In my home State of South Dakota, Ellsworth Air Force Base is currently preparing to be the first home of the B-21 bomber, where we will host both the Formal Training Unit and first operational squadron.

The B-21 bomber will eventually replace the Air Force's aging B-1 fleet and ensure that we have a long-range strike asset and leg of the nuclear triad capable of meeting the threats of the 21st century, wherever in the world they are found.

This year's NDAA authorizes critical funding for developing the B-21 and starting to transform Ellsworth to prepare for the mission, plus a requirement to maintain the remaining B-1 fleet until the bombers can be replaced by the B-21.

This is just one of the many critical national security investments we cannot afford to delay, but I guess our military men and women will just have to understand that Democrats' socialist spending spree takes priority.

It is not just our military men and women or appropriations bills that have had to take a back seat to the Democrats' burning desire to expand the size of government and its reach into Americans' lives. With their single-minded focus on their tax-and-spending spree and, of course, on federalizing election law to give themselves a permanent advantage in future elections, real crises facing our Nation seem to barely register on Democrats' radar.

We are in the midst of a serious, increasingly long-term inflation problem—a problem Democrats helped to trigger by dumping a lot of unnecessary government money into the economy earlier this year; yet Democrats are not only ignoring this crisis, they are preparing to make things worse by dumping even more government money into our economy.

SOUTHERN BORDER

Mr. President, then there is the crisis at the southern border. U.S. Customs and Border Protection encountered 192,000 individuals attempting to cross our southern border in September, a 233-percent increase from the previous September—233 percent. Customs and Border Protection apprehended more than 1.7 million individuals attempting to cross our southern border in fiscal year 2021—the highest number ever.

We have a security, enforcement, and humanitarian crisis at our southern border, and there is no sign that things are getting any better. Yet you could be forgiven for wondering if Democrats have even noticed.

I am pretty sure the President and his administration spent more time earlier this year fighting against the use of the word “crisis” to describe the situation at the border than they did actually thinking about how they might deal with the influx. The President's main response to the situation seems to be ignoring it in hopes that it will go away. He is happy to travel all over the place, whether to a campaign rally in Virginia or a climate change summit overseas, but he can't seem to find a minute to visit the southern border.

The border crisis is not the only crisis the President is ignoring. The President's disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal was a real low point for this country. Thirteen of our military men and women died in the terrorist attack. We abandoned thousands of individuals who had worked with us in Afghanistan and whom we had promised to protect, not to mention hundreds of Americans still working to find a way home. The President, who was supposed to restore our standing on the world stage, left our allies wondering if our word can be relied upon.

Most of all, the disastrous withdrawal has left our country in a much more precarious national security position. Afghanistan is ripe to once again become a terrorist haven. Just this week, a Pentagon official testified that ISIS-K, the ISIS Afghanistan affiliate, could be ready to launch terrorist attacks on our homeland in as little as 6 months—6 months. Al-Qaida, which looks set to once again find a safe haven in Afghanistan, could be ready to launch attacks in a year.

Yet, once again, this barely seems to register on the Biden administration's radar. We still have no agreements with neighboring countries to establish or make use of bases to launch counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan. The administration is apparently